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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 000172

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2019

TAGS: PREL EU SY SW

SUBJECT: SWEDEN ON SYRIA: EU ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT "FAR FROM CERTAIN"

REF: A. 3/6/09 GIAUQUE EMAIL ON "MATERIAL FOR THE MARCH GAERC AND GYMNICHE MEETINGS"

¶B. STATE 20919

Classified By: POL Counselor Marc Koehler, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) On March 12, Pol Counselor delivered reftel demarches to Dag Juhlin-Dannfelt, who was recently promoted to deputy of the MFA Middle East and North Africa Department. Dannfelt said the EU Association Agreement is a "long term" project and it is "far from certain" that consensus exists within the EU for placing the agreement on the agenda anytime soon.

Working Groups are currently discussing the agreement and the Commission is proceeding with a technical review. If all were to proceed without hitch, then a decision point could come later this year when Sweden holds the EU Presidency, he said, though he doubts the Commission will move that fast.

In any case, while the Swedish MFA has not finalized its position yet, it is leaning toward more engagement with Syria -- "not as aggressively as France" -- but some sort of contact that would be "better than isolation."

"Rapprochement" would allow the EU to raise different issues, such as human rights, he added.

¶12. (C) Dannfelt said Sweden is concerned about Syria's lack of cooperation with the IAEA but questioned whether Damascus really had been intent on pursuing a nuclear capability. Pol Counselor replied that the best way to determine the facts would be to push Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA. Dannfelt said that Sweden does want "all the facts sorted out" and supported the IAEA's efforts. He said this and other issues would need to be fully discussed before the EU would consider closer ties with Syria. Dannfelt said Sweden already pushes Syria on the other points in Ref B, including Syrian support for extremists and the importance of it fulfilling its obligations to Lebanon. "I cannot see us signing the Association Agreement when a caseload of critical issues is outstanding," he concluded.

SILVERMAN